

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

DLOS-06 EB-08 OES-06 EUR-12 COME-00 TRSE-00 ACDA-07

/094 W

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R 030219Z MAR 77

FM AMCONSUL SAPPORO

TO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 427

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIS, PINT, PLOS, JA

SUBJECT: HOKKAIDO FISHERMEN PROTEST EXCLUSION OF SOYA AND
TSUGARU STRAITS FROM PROPOSED 12-MILE LIMIT

1. SUMMARY: HOKKAIDO COASTAL FISHERMEN IN VICINITY OF SOYA AND TSUGARU STRAITS ARE PROTESTING PROBABLE EXCLUSION OF THESE AREAS AS "INTERNATIONAL STRAITS" FROM PROPOSED 12-MILE LIMIT. IF GOJ RETAINS PRESENT 3-MILE LIMIT IN THESE STRAITS TO AVOID NUCLEAR WEAPONS TRANSIT ISSUE, LOCAL FISHERMEN FEAR THEIR FISHING GROUNDS WILL BE FLOODED BY SOVIET AND SOUTH KOREAN BOATS FORCED OUT OF OTHER COASTAL AREAS BY ESTABLISHMENT OF 12-MILE LIMIT. DISSATISFACTION IS LIKELY TO REMAIN LOCALIZED SINCE MAJORITY OF HOKKAIDO COASTAL FISHERMEN HAVE ALREADY ACQUIESCED IN GOJ'S DECISION TO FREEZE STATUS OF INTERNATIONAL STRAITS AS "UNAVOIDABLE" PRICE FOR EXTENSION OF TERRITORIAL WATERS TO 12 MILES ELSEWHERE. BUT CONTROVERSY COULD PROVIDE OPPOSITION PARTIES WITH AMMUNITION AGAINST GOJ'S 12-MILE BILL AND COULD DEVELOP INTO MORE TROUBLESOME ISSUE IF RUSSIANS AND SOUTH KOREANS STEP UP THEIR FISHING OPERATIONS IN VICINITY OF TWO STRAITS.
END SUMMARY

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2. GOJ'S JANUARY 26 DECISION TO SEEK DIET APPROVAL OF BILL EXTENDING JAPAN'S TERRITORIAL WATERS TO 12 NAUTICAL MILES EXCEPT IN AREA OF INTERNATIONAL STRAITS HAS ELICITED SHARP PROTESTS FROM ABOUT 7,500 COASTAL FISHERMEN IN VICINITY OF SOYA AND TSUGARU STRAITS. THEY FEAR THAT RETENTION OF 3-MILE LIMIT THROUGH GOJ'S PROBABLE DESIGNATION OF THESE AREAS AS INTERNATIONAL STRAITS WILL ENCOURAGE SOVIET AND SOUTH KOREAN TRAWLERS TO BEGIN INTENSIVE

FISHING OPERATIONS THERE IF THEY ARE FORCED OUT OF OTHER COASTAL FISHING GROUNDS BY ESTABLISHMENT OF PROPOSED 12-MILE LIMIT. LOCAL FISHERMEN, MOST OF WHOM OPERATE SMALL BOATS OF 3-4 TONS, ARGUE THAT THEY WOULD BE UNABLE TO COMPETE WITH FOREIGN FISHING FLEETS AND WOULD LOSE SUBSTANTIAL PART OF THEIR 65,000 TON ANNUAL CATCH CURRENTLY TAKEN FROM WATERS BETWEEN 3 AND 12 MILES OFF COAST IN TWO STRAITS. THEY ALSO CLAIM THAT, ALTHOUGH FOREIGN FISHING BOATS HAVE NOT YET APPEARED IN FORCE IN AREA, THEIR NUMBERS HAVE INCREASED RECENTLY AND ARE LIKELY TO GROW MORE RAPIDLY AFTER ENACTMENT OF 12-MILE BILL UNLESS GOJ ADOPTS PROTECTIVE MEASURES.

3. IN SERIES OF PUBLIC STATEMENTS WIDELY CARRIED IN LOCAL PRESS, SPOKESMEN FOR SOYA AND TSUGARU AREA FISHERMEN HAVE BITTERLY CRITICIZED NATIONAL AND PREFECTURAL FISHING ORGANIZATIONS FOR INCLUSION WITHIN PROPOSED 12-MILE LIMIT. LEADERSHIP OF HOKKAIDO'S FISHING INDUSTRY HAD INITIALLY PROPOSED UNIFORM APPLICATION OF 12-MILE LIMIT TO ALL COASTAL AREAS, BUT DROPPED THIS DEMAND WHEN GOJ INSISTED ON EXCLUSION OF INTERNATIONAL STRAITS IN EFFORT TO SIDESTEP NUCLEAR WEAPONS TRANSIT ISSUE AND AVOID SETTING OF PRECEDENT WHICH COULD LEAD TO CLOSURE OF FOREIGN STRAITS. INDUSTRY'S LEADERS HAVE DEFENDED THEIR ACTION AS "UNAVOIDABLE" CONCESSION NECESSARY TO ATTAIN THEIR LONGSTANDING OBJECTIVE OF PROTECTING MAJORITY OF COASTAL FISHERMEN FROM FOREIGN FISHING OPERATIONS THROUGH ESTABLISHMENT OF 12-MILE LIMIT. PRINCIPAL BENEFICIARIES OF ENACTMENT OF 12-MILE BILL WILL BE COASTAL FISHERMEN IN SOUTHERN HOKKAIDO WHO ANTICIPATE 60 PERCENT REDUCTION IN DAMAGE TO THEIR NETS AND OTHER FISHING GEAR CAUSED PRIMARILY BY SOVIET TRAWLERS.

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4. DISCONTENT OF SOYA AND TSUGARU FISHERMEN COULD PROVIDE OPPOSITION PARTIES WITH SOME AMMUNITION AGAINST GOJ'S 12-MILE BILL WHEN IT IS SUBMITTED TO DIET, PROBABLY IN LATE MARCH. RECENT DIET INTERPELLATIONS ON ISSUE, FOR EXAMPLE, INDICATE THAT JAPAN SOCIALIST PARTY (JSP) WILL CONCENTRATE MUCH OF ITS CRITICISM AGAINST BILL ON ITS APPARENT DISCRIMINATION AGAINST COASTAL FISHERMEN IN VICINITY OF INTERNATIONAL STRAITS WHICH, ACCORDING TO JSP, VIOLATES SEVERAL PROVISIONS OF JAPANESE CONSTITUTION. GOJ HAS DENIED CONSTITUTIONAL VIOLATIONS AND DEFENDED ITS DECISION TO EXCLUDE INTERNATIONAL STRAITS FROM PROPOSED 12-MILE LIMIT AS ESSENTIAL TO MAINTAIN PRINCIPLE OF FREEDOM OF PASSAGE ELSEWHERE SUCH AS STRAIT OF MALACCA IN WHICH JAPAN HAS VITAL INTEREST. GOJ ALSO DISCOUNTS LIKELIHOOD OF SERIOUS DAMAGE TO LOCAL FISHERMEN FROM INCREASED FOREIGN FISHING OPERATIONS, ARGUING THAT SOVIET AND SOUTH KOREAN TRAWLERS WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO AVOID STRAITS DUE TO PRESENCE OF STRONG CURRENTS AND RELATIVE SCARCITY OF SPECIES LIKE SARDINES AND MACKEREL WHICH FORM THEIR MAIN CATCH.

5. COMMENT: SOYA AND TSUGARU FISHERMEN REMAIN UNCONVINCED BY GOJ ARGUMENTS AND ARE LIKELY DURING COMING WEEKS TO PRESS DEMANDS FOR THEIR INCLUSION WITHIN 12-MILE LIMIT OR, FAILING THIS, FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF EFZ (EXCLUSIVE FISHERY ZONE) IN STRAITS. UNLESS SOVIETS OR SOUTH KOREANS SHARPLY INCREASE THEIR FISHING OPERATIONS IN AREA, THEREBY CONFIRMING FEARS WHICH ARE AT PRESENT LARGELY HYPOTHETICAL, STRAITS CONTROVERSY WILL PROBABLY REMAIN MINOR BUT POTENTIALLY TROUBLESOME POLITICAL ISSUE FOR GOJ. WHILE WE WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR PLAYOUT OF DISPUTE, WE HAVE SO FAR OBSERVED LITTLE INCLINATION ON PART OF PREFECTURAL GOVERNMENT OR FISHING INDUSTRY TO BECOME INVOLVED. CONCERN OF MOST HOKKAIDO AND NORTHERN JAPAN FISHERMEN HAS SHIFTED FROM QUESTION OF IMPLEMENTATION OF 12-MILE LIMIT TO THAT OF ITS INFLUENCE ON RUSSIAN POSITION AT FORTHCOMING JAPAN-SOVIET FISHERY NEGOTIATIONS. FARRAR

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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From: SAPPORO
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Image Path:
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Line Count: 131
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Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3218552
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HOKKAIDO FISHERMEN PROTEST EXCLUSION OF SOYA AND TSUGARU STRAITS FROM PROPOSED 12-MILE LIMIT
TAGS: EFIS, PINT, PLOS, JA
To: TOKYO
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/bb0838be-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009